DYING FOR A CHANGE? BRINGING NEW SENSES TO NEAR EASTERN NEOLITHIC MORTUARY PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Near Eastern Archaeology is traditionally a discipline structured by rigid chronological and typological frameworks, where chronology is prioritised above other interpretations and dialogues. In a broader context, archaeology generally has prioritised the sense of vision, both in its methodology and in its interpretation, largely neglecting the role of other senses. Both these factors can be argued to reflect the masculist hegemonic ideals inherently dominant in the discipline. In this paper the traditional stance is challenged; the sensual methodology and interpretation of archaeology is explored, with specific relation to the Death Pit at Domuztepe (southeast Turkey, c. 5500 cal B.C.), where the disarticulated and further fragmented remains of around 40 persons have been recovered. A multi-sensual interpretation, incorporating all the senses, is explored, where blood, substances, touch, taste, noise, light, fire and aromas would have enhanced experiences surrounding the Death Pit. Such an interpretation offers an alternative to the traditional chrono-centric approaches dominating the discipline.

Near Eastern archaeology is a complex discipline which has historically lacked a developed reflexive framework. Many, and perhaps most, practitioners still work without questioning their analytical and explanatory frameworks. Alongside some notable examples of innovative fieldwork and interpretative approaches, there is an ever-present background in which Near Eastern archaeology remains situated within a colonial past. The most pervasive models remain characterised by an ultimate foundation of often poorly excavated and poorly recorded sites, over which dominates the striving for chronological and regional frameworks with which to categorise this material. Although the situation is changing, at least with regard to excavation and recording, the preoccupation with chronological frameworks and 'culture groups' still continues. We have attempted in this paper to move beyond these accepted frameworks to investigate alternative avenues of interpretation, using queer theory to challenge the traditional approach, and offering new multi-sensual interpretations of aspects of identity, personhood and relationships in the past within Near Eastern archaeological material.

Within traditional Near Eastern chronological frameworks are situated within cultural traditions, such as the 'PPNB', 'Ubaid', 'Halaf' or 'Uruk', labels usually taken from the site of discovery (Matthews 2003:20-21). These labels are then used to define sites according to assumed regularities in material culture, usually based on pottery types for the ceramic Neolithic onwards, and lithics for earlier periods. Other aspects such as subsistence strategy, architecture and mortuary practice are loosely integrated to create cultural 'packages'; neat entities which are then placed into their regional and chronological frameworks (see for example current summaries by Roaf 1996, Matthews 2000, Charvát 2002). The diffusion of such traits are then usually mapped and discussed in order to assess the spread and diffusion of cultural influences.

As recently noted by Matthews (2003:64), the significance of sites is taken from our "ability to pinpoint them with some precision within a fixed chronological framework". Essentially, the purpose of most investigation is working towards the refining of regional and temporal frameworks, and the position of sites within these.

Such an approach is still apparent in recent research, as demonstrated in a synopsis of Southern Levantine sites in 2002, which concluded that "the refinement of cultural-historical sequences" was an important area for future research, arguing that whilst "on a relative basis, the culture-history of the prehistoric periods of the southern Levant is well understood" debate continues over "the organisation of the cultural-historical schemes, as well as on the length and period of time for individual phases" (Kuijt & Goring-Morris

2002:431). Even if we take the example of possibly the most explicit recent attempt to challenge traditional approaches to the archaeology of the Middle East in a book length format (Pollock and Bernbeck 2005), it is still felt necessary to make the first substantial chapter one based on a very traditional cultural-historical framework, albeit one which is introduced by a slightly uneasy introductory paragraph (Bernbeck and Pollock 2005).

Such is the extent of this approach that often attempts to pin down the exact chronology or date of material prioritises and distracts from examining the evidence at hand. There have been many conferences where the frustration of speakers and researchers has been apparent as fascinating papers, bringing about new and challenging approaches to the archaeological material, have been overlooked when they do not focus on the accepted chronological frameworks. Often any following discussion would focus on one minute area of chronological or typological detail, and the broader argument on which the paper was based would be largely lost or ignored.

It seems that in order for any academic work to be given credibility, it must first be firmly situated in the accepted framework, and for many sites (although there are exceptions) this is as far as interpretation goes, simply searching for the patterns and signs which categorise its site-type. By being situated within the accepted culture-historical framework, it is difficult not to become trapped, enmeshed in an explanatory network that privileges the construction and understanding of large scale space and time along very traditional archaeological lines of thought.

This is especially tragic in a discipline whose very chronological framework itself is so tentative. Chronological frameworks are based on evidence from scattered excavations of varying reliability. This is combined with decades of colonial looting, prompted by affluent art markets, producing unprovenanced material. There are also problems with reliable sampling and recording, as well issues with calibration of ^{14}C dating. Given the nature of the evidence, it is especially unfortunate that the discipline places so much importance on chronology – particularly when the wealth of material allows for fruitful and stimulating debate in other areas. If we must wait for chronology to be fully understood before exploiting this wealth of material, it will be a long wait indeed.

A comparable challenge has been faced by Thomas Dowson in relation to rock art, a specialism within archaeology often subject to criticism from its academic peers due to difficulties associated with chronology and the provision of accurate dates for rock art. In such an academic climate the obsession with dating portrays an assumption that "without a chronology your research is worthless" (Dowson 2000a [1998]:289). Without the ability to tie material into a particular timeframe, further interpretations are sadly often perceived as ungrounded. The very obsession with chronology is itself one which has been argued by Dowson (2000a [1998]:289) to prioritise the modern, western hetero-, andro-, and euro-centric stance, a result of the "masculist, heterosexist values and assumptions that rule our society today". Dowson (2000a [1998]:289) argues that although "challenging the prominence afforded the direct and indirect dating of rock art imagery and the chrono-centric nature of archaeology in general is decidedly QUEER", it is nonetheless "no less methodologically rigorous", and provides a challenge to "hegemonic social and cultural formations".

It is partly as a consequence of this chrono-centric approach that there has been an obsession in Near Eastern archaeology with the identification of large-scale trends and developments such as the Neolithic and urbanism. The Neolithic is traditionally characterised as the period when we witness a shift from hunter-gathering to agriculture, with primarily the domestication of plants, followed by the domestication of animals, and much research has focused on the roots and subsequent spread of both the Neolithic and agriculture. For example, with regard to South East Turkey and North Mesopotamia, it is the traditional understanding that during the adoption of agriculture, influence spread from the Southern Levant region northwards (Watkins 1998:1). With regard to urbanisation, this was seen to have originated and spread from Southern Mesopotamia, under the influence of imperialistic leaders (Watkins 1998:1). Essentially, North Mesopotamia is considered to be peripheral to the cores of both the Levant or South Mesopotamia. However, the driving force behind this may simply be due primarily to processes of discovery. This approach has equally been a result of a generally unchallenged fixation on a social evolutionary framework, initiated by Childe with his emphasis on Neolithic and Urban Revolutions and later through the influence of 1960s models of social evolution drawn from anthropology (most

explicitly seen in Redman 1978 but implicit in the majority of approaches in Near Eastern archaeology before and since). There is an inherent assumption of linear time relating to human social development, whereby "modern societies understand themselves as standing at the end of sequences of development" Thomas 2004:90-91), with urbanism and the city state traditionally perceived as the eventual outcome of developmental sequences. Consequently, at times there has been an overwhelming tendency to situate each site according to its place on the development curve of these changes in hierarchy and organisation, fitting sites into their appropriate 'culture group'.

Furthermore, we see the acceptance of periods and culture groups, such as the 'PPNB' or 'Halaf', as real, quantifiable entities, when in reality we should place more emphasis on the fact that these are merely our labels, used at best as a tool to aid the archaeologist in their categorisation of the past. These entities are then generally used as the basic blocks from which interpretations of social behaviour and change are modelled. Change is generally described in terms that are intuitively meaningful on the level of individuals or contemporary groups – emulation, migration, technological and social choice etc. Using such human-scale explanation treats culture groups almost as actors within an historical narrative. There are fundamental problems with this. Firstly, the entities themselves are probably deeply flawed and perhaps imaginary to a significant extent, creations in many senses of the ways in which the past has been coerced into particular explanatory frameworks (Campbell 1998, 1999, 2000). They can be considered as attempts to control the past and make it conform to acceptable models. Secondly, the human scale of the explanations of change seems inappropriate to the nature of the entities being explained. These entities, even if they existed in any literal sense, are made of societies widely separated in time and space – at a rather wild guesstimate, we may typically be talking about rather less than one excavated site per 100 km^2 per 100 years. Even within sites, chronological divisions are probably multi-generational. Archaeological entities on this scale cannot simply to be considered as if they were human actors; change is the product of whole sets of very varied and superimposed individual decisions and actions rather than having a single narrative. These large scale narratives subsume the variety of human actions into an assumed normative pattern.

If we consider this mismatch from the opposite perspective, and apply the traditional models to human-scale examples, it seems clear that 'Neolithic man', or indeed woman or child (!), did not wake up one morning and decide to be 'Neolithic'. They certainly did not perceive that they were the instigators of such a fundamental shift, or perceive the impact the adoption of agriculture would have. This change to agriculture was in reality so gradual that in all likelihood they were simply living everyday life, just as generations before them had done, changing and adapting as humans inevitably do in much more incremental steps, in response to much smaller personal and social stimuli.

Often in the search for large-scale patterns little attention is paid to individual sites, and even less to individual features on sites. We should look beyond defining and re-defining these 'cultural packages', these discrete social and chronological entities, and examine the smaller scale in archaeology first, accepting that a nice, neat pattern to the archaeological material often does not exist in reality.

There are undoubtedly numerous avenues for criticism of current and past archaeological interpretations of Near Eastern material; it is apparent that inherent in many traditional interpretations are assumptions which naturalise and legitimate modern Western ideals and morals through their projection back into the past, as the works of Gatens (1992), Gero (1992), Dowson (2000a [1998]) and others have readily pointed out. However, although there is merit in critical evaluation of previous work, it is a far greater challenge to provide new and alternative interpretations which challenge the hetero-, euro- and andro-centric nature of traditional reports. The actual application of theories such as queer theory to real archaeological data is essential in moving beyond the perpetuation of biased ideals into the past. However, queer theories are often difficult to integrate into actual archaeological interpretation and practice. They are often discussed at a theoretical level, but rarely applied to actual archaeological material, with the exception of representation and archaeological art histories (Voss 2000:187). As discussed by Voss (2000:186), "queer theory citations were especially common in introductions to edited volumes and conference proceedings and rare in archaeological case studies, suggesting that queer theory has been used predominantly to theorize the feminist archaeological project as a whole rather than to interpret archaeological evidence".

In this present work queer theory has actively been applied to actual archaeological data and interpretation, where through a discussion of the Death Pit at Domuztepe, interpretations which challenge the hetero-, euro- and andro-centric nature of much discourse have been sought.

It seems then that the way forward is to incorporate queer (and feminist) theories into our interpretations from the start, using them naturally in our debates and discussions when assessing real archaeological material. In this sense, queer theory should not be simply applied as an 'add-on' to interpretations, but incorporated into an approach which attempts to move beyond the perpetuation of modern western morals and ideals into the past, thus integrating, rather than segregating, queer theory into mainstream archaeological discourse. Such an approach is demonstrated below through the case study of the Death Pit at Domuztepe, Turkey.

Situated on the Kharamanmaraş plain in southeast Anatolia (Figure 1), Domuztepe dates to around 5500 cal B.C., and in the traditional cultural framework would be placed in the 'Halaf' tradition. It was an exceptionally large settlement for its time and location, around 20 ha in size (Figure 2), and has been excavated under the direction of Stuart Campbell and Elizabeth Carter since 1995 (Campbell et al. 1999; Carter, Campbell and Gauld 2003).

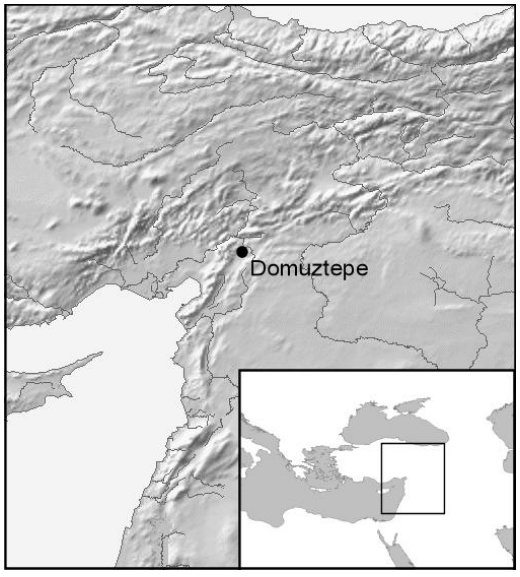

Figure 1. Location of Domuztepe

Although considerable portions of the site have now been excavated, we wish to focus on one particular feature of interest, where a complex series of activities produced an equally complex feature that has informally become known as the 'Death Pit' (Figure 3). This is located within the central area of the settlement. Over a relatively short period of time, an initial series of excavated hollows filled primarily with animal remains were covered by a dense deposit in which were placed the disarticulated and further fragmented remains of around 40 individuals, together with more animal bones and a variety of fragmentary and complete artefacts. The whole deposit was then covered with a layer of ash (Campbell et al. 1999:402-404; Carter, Campbell and Gauld 2003; Kansa and Campbell 2004). Although this main phase of deposition was almost certainly brief, a matter of days or perhaps a few weeks, the location remained special for a much longer period. Substantial posts may have acted as markers and an area of at least 20-25 m across was left free from buildings for a period of perhaps 50-70 years. During this subsequent period, further fragmented human remains (including complete skulls but also very fragmentary portions) were deposited around the Death Pit, along with further ash deposits within pits.

Figure 2. The settlement mound of Domuztepe from the southwest

Figure 3. Work in a portion of the Death Pit in 1998

This is a very rich and complex set of deposits and this paper only touches on a small portion of the evidence and possible interpretations. One aspect that is particularly relevant is that there is a high degree of fragmentation of the human body within the Death Pit, although certain bodies underwent greater fragmentation than others. Many underwent splitting of the long bones, and removal of part of the cranium, whilst other bones were interred intact. There is evidence of particular selection of long and skull bones for deposition within the Death Pit (Figure 4).

Such remains suggest alternative interpretations of identity and individuality than experienced in the modern West. Recent archaeological and anthropological studies have highlighted that the experience of the bounded individual is a construct arising from the modern, western situation; an experience that, in common with gender, is socially constructed rather than a universal given. However, the situation of the individual is often taken for granted in archaeological interpretation, especially in relation to Near Eastern archaeology, where, as discussed above, the discipline is dominated by culture historic and processual approaches, rarely dealing with issues other than the traditional areas of study such as subsistence, hierarchy and economy. In other areas of archaeological discourse, such as recent British and European prehistoric studies, concepts of personhood and identity have been more openly explored. The works of Brück (2001), Chapman (2000), Fowler (2001), and Thomas (2000) for example, have all discussed the situation of individual identity. Drawing on anthropological works, most commonly Strathern's investigation of personhood in Melanesia in *Gender of the Gift* (1988), the assumption of the individual in the past has been challenged. Such studies demonstrate a variety of alternative experiences of being in the world from our own. For example, in Strathern's study (1988:12-15) the concept of the 'dividual' rather than the 'individual' person is prevalent, where persons are constructed of gendered parts, which combine to form the person, and are negotiated through relationships and exchanges with others. In such cases personal identity is not centred on the concept and experience of the bounded individual entity, but rather bodies are regarded as social and communal objects, where bodily experiences are fluid and changeable, interrelated with other persons, or even animals and objects. In such contexts, experiences of the body, and its relationship to the surrounding world, differ vastly from our experiences; in the modern West the body is bounded and integral, and material items are viewed in materialistic terms of objects, artefacts and products, rather than integrated into concepts of personhood and being.

In those British and European prehistoric studies mentioned above, mortuary practice and the treatment of animals and material culture are examined, with the conclusion that, from certain contexts, little evidence exists of the concept of the body as an individual bounded entity. Rather, evidence often actively denies the concept of the individual, such as argued by Fowler (2001:145) in relation to the Neolithic of the Isle of Man. Here, the fragmented body in the mortuary arena suggests alternative identity constructions from our own, where the fragmentation of bodies, peoples and animals is indicative of "a set of practices that cited and reiterated forms of personhood that were not bounded and individuated. Instead, in life and death Neolithic peoples were immersed in a world of relations between persons, places, animals and artefacts" (Thomas 2004:147).

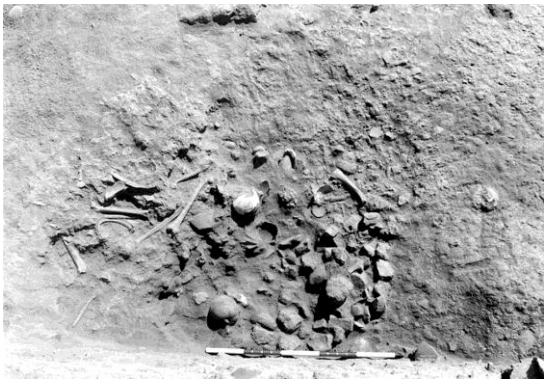

Figure 4. One of the later phases in the main phase of the Death Pit, showing skulls and to the north (left in this photograph) a cluster of human long bones.

Within Near Eastern archaeology, mortuary practices, such as the high degree of intentional fragmentation of the body in the Death Pit, often suggest that concepts of the bounded individual body were neither intended nor apparently relevant in certain mortuary contexts, where we witness a high fragmentation and de-individualisation of both the human body, as well the bodies of animals, and certain material objects. Such cases allow for an investigation of the themes of individuality and identity, often in relation to practices of fragmentation, circulation, manipulation and discard, in relation to human bodies, animal bodies, and material culture, and their conceptualisation in reference to the body.

However, interpretation of this kind is rarely explored in relation to Near Eastern sites, where traditionally features such as the Death Pit at Domuztepe would simply be labelled as 'ritual', allowing little further discussion of the evidence other than perhaps an attempt to link it with any similar sites, map mortuary practice, or attempt to place it into a structured chronological and regional timeframe.

Alternative avenues of interpretation exist through an investigation of a range of senses of personhood and relationships within a wider context of sensual experience. This can be achieved through an observation of modern archaeological interpretation; in most approaches to archaeology the sense of vision is prioritised, with its importance overplayed in archaeological interpretation (MacGregor 1999:264), despite available ethnographic accounts documenting the "variety of ritual experience" which reach beyond merely describing what events 'looked' like (Watson 2001:179).

The extent of this perceived priority of vision is prevalent through lived experience in the modern West, where optical care is taken for granted, and corrected perfect vision is expected and considered the norm. However, most humans do not have perfect vision, and engagement with the world without the aid of glasses or contact lenses becomes an entirely altered experience filled with clocks that cannot be seen, faces which cannot be recognised, and so on. That such an experience of the surrounding world exists for those without modern eye-care is rarely considered, and there is little acknowledgment of the altered experiences which would have shaped expectation, perception and the construction of memory in the past.

This privileging of vision over other senses in the modern West allows for a "disengagement and objectivity rather than passionate and sensual engagement" with the surrounding world (Thomas 2004:234), placing the viewer in a distanced situation. Embedded within this modern Western experience is the perceived relationship between the viewer and the viewed. Such a relationship is comparable to that between the viewer and the painted (Hirsch 1995:3; Thomas 1993:22), with its roots in modern, post-Renaissance thinking, where the painter began to create realistic impressions of the landscape and other subjects (Thomas 1993:21). The artist, and viewer, gazed upon the subject from a removed, distanced vantage point, one which objectified the subject.

This relationship is discussed by Thomas as being a gendered gaze, a voyeuristic relationship, comparable to the 'male gaze' on the female actresses of early cinema, with the object (woman or landscape) being there to be looked at, or gazed upon, by the *male, detached* and *voyeuristic*, observer (1993:24-25 emphasis added).

Such a 'male gaze' on the female subject, as is inherent in our way of observing the past, is also a heterosexual male gaze – masculist and heteronormative. As discussed by Classen, Dowson and She in *World Archaeology's* Queer Theory edition (2000), such a hetero-normative and masculist approach is inherent in archaeology and present in much of our 'observations' of archaeological material. When excavating and recording we tend to focus on visual aspects, forgetting the role of other senses; we extract other sensual experiences from our portrayal and evaluations of archaeological material. For example, when excavating on many Near Eastern sites the process of excavation is itself a multi-sensual experience. Little visual differentiation is apparent between cuts and fills, and instead the excavator relies on the touch and feel of the soil, and the sounds made by the trowel. However, this evidence is reduced in excavation reports to two dimensional visual representations; both volume and colour is removed and variability suppressed (Leibhammer 2000). Furthermore, there is no mention of other sensual experiences. This prioritising of vision is apparent not just in our representation of the archaeological material, but also in the kinds of pasts we portray; what sites looked like are the main focus, with visual reconstructions now a feature of many reports. Little attention is paid to other aspects or reconstructions of the site, such as speculation about smells, taste, sounds, and other sensual experiences. As will be emphasised in the forthcoming full publication of the Death Pit, it is vital that these are brought into consideration in any archaeological interpretation.

We are furthermore removed from our subject through the recording process; we take photographs, draw plans and sections, and situate finds on site plans, all of which are in line with the 'male gaze', placing the excavator as a distanced observer; removed and abstracted from the archaeological evidence.

If the prioritisation of vision, then, has its foundations in a hetero- and andro-centric stance, we would argue that an approach which investigates and explores in our material other

senses is a challenge to the heteronormative approach, and in addition moves beyond the obsession discussed above with chronological and cultural frameworks. Such an approach challenges the normative in archaeological interpretations, facilitating the production of new and colourful interpretations of archaeological material.

Recent artwork by Anya Gallaccio, a 2003 Turner Prize entrant, has explored the sense of smell through the use of natural and rotting materials in her pieces. The artwork gradually rots and decays, emitting aromas, investigating themes of death and decay through art, designed to stimulate more than just sight. Such pieces are designed to prompt us to think about other senses, an approach which can serve as motivation for archaeological interpretation.

It is evident that smell would have contributed to the experience of the Death Pit, where the mixture of both fresh and decomposing remains would have produced an aroma undoubtedly unpleasant and putrid to us, although this revulsion may not have affected the inhabitants of Domuztepe. As Hertz (1960 [1907]:32) advises, we should not credit people in the past with the same (in)tolerances. Indeed, such experiences are often culturally constructed, where revulsion to certain smells and tastes, for example, are not universal, but can be both taught and overcome. Smell in itself is different to other senses, where it often cannot easily be avoided. Where one can refuse to taste or touch, it is difficult not to experience odours (Seigal 1983:9).

In addition, smell has a closer connection with memory and experience. Images and sounds can today be described and experienced second hand, through pictures and recordings/imitations, in a way that smells cannot. Smell is only recognisable through experience, although it has been commented that the smell of decomposing flesh, while difficult to describe, is uncannily recognisable, even when not previously experienced (Seigal 1983:9). The inescapability of the odour of the Death Pit must surely have constructed experience and memory around it.

Sound is also likely to have played a substantial role in the events taking place, the arena and topology allowing sounds and acoustics to carry. As well as human voice (including possibly screams and shouts), music or percussion may have featured in the performance of events at the Death Pit. Natural sounds may also have contributed – carrion birds, dogs and other scavengers may be suspected, although the absence of extensive gnawing marks suggests they may have been actively driven away, itself part of the complex of activities. During the series of events that make up the primary rituals within the Death Pit, there may also have been gaps of hours or a few days in activity during which an absence of sound may have been just as noticeable.

Lighting and colours should also be considered. Events may have happened in daytime or at night, or probably a combination of both. This would vastly alter the experience, perhaps heightening some senses or muting others. Additions of torches or fires would equally add drama, both in providing additional focus and in giving a flickering, atmospheric light, as well as smoke, to the scene.

Touch and taste may also have been a feature, at least for some active participants in this ritual activity. As discussed by Lupton in 1996, taste and consumption can themselves be intensely emotive events, often "intertwined with embodied sensations and strong feelings ranging the spectrum from disgust, hate, fear and anger to pleasure, satisfaction, and desire" (Lupton 1996:36). The importance of acts and occasions of consumption as contexts for a wide range of social interactions scarcely need emphasis here.

The presence of blood, often considered an "emotive substance" through its close associations with both life and death (Lupton 1996:121-122), would have played a role in the experience surrounding the Death Pit. Although we cannot say what symbolisms and significances were held here, it is evident that the presence of quantities of blood must have played a significant role in constructing experiences of the Death Pit. In addition to blood, there would also have been considerable quantities of skin, muscle, and bodily innards, combined with comparable blood and waste material from the quantities of animals apparently slaughtered and butchered here. The processes involved in the defleshing and processing of human remains would have been far from sanitised, and in order to get to bone, layers of muscles, organs, nerves, tendons, entrails and so on must first be removed (Figure 5).

It is all too easy from the sterile remains at the end of the trowel to forget the gorier side of events necessarily accompanying the production of such remains. The bones we excavate are in a clean state, and we go on to write reports de-emphasising the reality that these would have been in a state of either fleshed or partially

fleshed remains. For example, one particular skull, recovered from the periphery of the Death Pit as one of the depositions that were subsequent to the main phase of the ceremonies, belonged to a female, aged around 16-18 years, possibly killed by a blow to the head (Figure 6). We can see that her mandible is clearly attached, thus articulated and buried in a fleshed state. The remains were evidently interred with an appearance very far from the 'clean' one recovered from the ground in excavation.

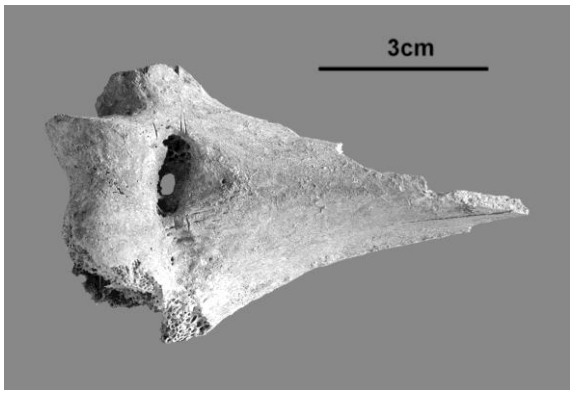

Figure 5. Human bone from the Death Pit with cut marks from the disarticulation process.

The perceived sterile state of bones is compounded by the modern experience of both food preparation and mortuary practice, where the butchery of animals has become sanitised and removed from the consumer, who purchases clean, packaged products (Lupton 1996:118). Additionally, it is rare that we come into any real contact with the deceased, or witness the natural decay or decomposition of bodies (Metcalf & Huntington 1991:26).

Figure 6. One of the later deposits on the southwestern periphery of the Delta Pit: A head of a 16-18 year old female in a small shallow pit.

Indeed, the deceased human body has itself become a taboo subject, as demonstrated through opposition to a proposed exhibition by the Science Museum in London of a decaying corpse (Sunday Times, 14 March 2004), and the huge public objection to exhibitions such as 'Body Worlds' which entailed the manipulation of corpses of consenting human subjects, or even the reaction provoked in America at the proposal of 'death education' in schools (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:25). It is apparent that in the modern West we are comfortably far removed from the actual experiences surrounding death. Such experiences lead us to isolate death, and consequently it is easy to forget the actuality and sensual experiences surrounding death and the human body. This apparently was not the situation for those inhabitants of Domuztepe during the time of events at the Death Pit. Repeated discovery of fragmented human remains in many contexts at the site emphasise that the interaction of the living with the dead may have occurred in a great variety of situations; an experience far removed from ours today.

These different sensory aspects of the Death Pit provide a reminder of the richness of the experience of participants and witnesses. These experiences, however, would have been far from static or universal. The Death Pit was positioned in a location that emphasised the prominence of activities taking place in it, but may also have limited, distanced or controlled access. Different participants in different locations would have experienced events differently. Furthermore, although the physical remains excavated in the Death Pit are obviously tied to a single location, they represent the product of a series of actions at different locations across or even beyond the settlement. Not all the dismemberment took place in the Death Pit, or at least not all the remains from the individuals are represented in the excavated material. The fire that produced the ash that capped the Death Pit took place at some other location as well. If some of the animal remains, particularly the cattle, represent feasting debris, the cooking and perhaps consumption took place elsewhere. Different individuals may have participated in different aspects of the event associated with the Death Pit and had very different sensory experiences. Indeed the mix of changing associations of place and the dynamic movement between them may have been crucial aspects of experience.

Chronology is also a factor to consider here, although on a much more relevant human-

scale than discussed earlier. Although the primary depositions in the Death took place over a short period of time, the ordering of events, and their accompanying sensory associations, must have contributed strongly to the way in which memory was formed – and indeed the ways in which it interacted with previous recollections of similar events. As outlined above, the Death Pit should not be considered simply as a single episode. It was undoubtedly a dramatic one, but also one that was reflected in the subsequent use of this particular location within the site. The area may not have been in intensive use for a significant period of time. It may well have represented an open area within the settlement, perhaps an area in which sound was muted or at least different to that experienced in more vibrant areas of the settlement. Periodically, however, further much smaller deposits of ash and fragmented human remains were placed in the vicinity of the Death Pit. Smells, tastes, sounds and the whole range of sensations of the initial establishment may have been repeated episodically, perhaps on a smaller or more intimate scale, and referenced the richness of the initial sensory experience as a powerful way of reworking memory and remembrance.

It is perhaps particularly significant that the best, albeit very rough, estimate for the period before building and more mundane activity encroached on the area of the Death Pit is somewhere in the order of 50-70 years,. It is, however, broadly the period over which the first hand experience and sensory richness of memory of those who witnessed and took part in the original ceremonies would have been lost.

Traditionally, a sanitised account of events is 'recalled', which is likely to overlook the actuality of the experiences that the evidence implies, and the very real presence of blood and bodily substances, and issues of decomposition and decay. Activity surrounding the Death Pit would have been a fully sensory experience, one featuring heavily in the construction and continuation of the memory of the events that took place. That the events happened in a short time scale adds a further dimension to the consideration of chronology and dating. Evidently the Death Pit remained of significance for further generations, although the memory and significance of the place was no doubt altered and manipulated through time, leading to the eventual encroachment of buildings over the area. The multi-sensual experience of the Death Pit would have contributed to the construction of the social memory of the place, affecting the significance of the area both during its immediate use, and for succeeding generations. The importance of these aspects in experiences of the Death Pit should not be over-looked, and are of equal importance to descriptions of the visual aspects of sites and features. Through failing to recognise these alternative avenues of interpretation, vital aspects of the archaeological material are lost, perpetuating the removed, distanced and sanitised accounts we are all familiar with.

It is through engaging with such multi-sensual approaches that a multiplicity of relationships can be explored. Stepping beyond the limited range of traditional, stereotypical models allows alternative ways of experiencing the evidence, deviating from the heteronormative approach of prioritising chronology and vision, inherent in much of our archaeology, by incorporating discourses such as queer theory into our archaeological discourse, moves beyond an archaeology which portrays a past rooted in hetero-, Euro- and andro-centric ideals.

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